



Peter McLaren and Gustavo Fischman

Organic Intellectuals

The attached item today, in this fifth part of our current course, has the long title: *“Rethinking Critical Pedagogy and the Gramscian and Freirean Legacies: From Organic to Committed Intellectuals or Critical Pedagogy, Commitment, and Praxis”*. It is by Gustavo Fischman and [Peter McLaren](#), who are present-day exponents of [Critical Pedagogy](#), or in other words the educational method of Paulo Friere.

The McLaren/Fischman article immediately starts to grapple with “the notion of teachers as transformative intellectuals”.

If you had a method of educating the masses, what else would you need in the way of revolution? Is there any difference between politics and political education? Or is it a trinity that is at the same time a unity, namely: Educate, Organise, Mobilise?

Paulo Freire concentrated his intellectual fire on the single most practical priority, which at the same time requires the deepest philosophical clarity: the education of the existing masses. He called it “**The Pedagogy of the Oppressed**”.

Fischman and McLaren make clear, by reference to Gramsci, that such a Pedagogy of the Oppressed is a direct form of class struggle. It is a direct confrontation with the interests of the bourgeois state. The Pedagogy of the Oppressed is an open contradiction of the bourgeois class dictatorship as applied through state-led education, as well as through the instructive function of the judiciary.

The authors note that Gramsci is often misappropriated ([see also CU](#)). They write:

“Because Gramsci identified civil society as an arena used by the ruling class to exert its hegemony over the society, the struggle for Gramsci was not to transform civil society but rather, as Holst points out, ‘to build proletarian hegemony’.”

That is to say: proletarian ascendancy, also known as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Fischman and McLaren are rejecting the view of “hegemony” as a “Third Way” that could by-pass revolutionary confrontation. Revolution cannot be by-passed. It is an unavoidable necessity.

After discussing Gramsci’s organic intellectuals they quote Gramsci as follows:

“Critical self-consciousness means, historically and politically, the construction of an elite of intellectuals. A human mass does not ‘distinguish’ itself, does not become independent in its own right without, in the widest sense, organizing itself; and there is no organization without intellectuals, that is without organizers and leaders, in other words, without the theoretical aspect of the theory-practice nexus being distinguished concretely by the existence of a group of ‘specialized’ in conceptual and philosophical elaboration of ideas.”

Fischman and McLaren go on to argue for the “committed intellectual”, with “an unwavering commitment to the struggle against injustice”.

These words aptly describe the revolutionary teachers necessary to a revolutionary society. They can as well be understood as describing a cadre force of communists: a Communist Party.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Organic Intellectuals, 2005, McLaren and Fischman](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).